

APBA's GREAT FOOTBALL TEAMS OF THE PAST - Vol. 2

1. PHILADELPHIA 1949

The Eagles breezed to their third straight Eastern Division crown losing only once in twelve games, a 38-21 setback at the Bears October 16. Philly finished 4 1/2 games ahead of second place Pittsburgh. The Eagles' success still rested on the twin pillars of their outstanding 5-2-4 "Eagle Defense" and a ball-control offense built around All-Pro RB Steve Van Buren, who led the league in rushing attempts, yards, and rushing TDs. The other speedy HB, Bosh Pritchard, provided a wide threat. The pilot of the highest-scoring offense in the league, Tommy Thompson, has been somewhat overlooked for his contributions to the Eagles' success. The slick ballhandler was adept at faking a handout, hiding the ball on his hip, and flinging a pass downfield.

2. GREEN BAY 1966

This team won Super Bowl I. The Packers went 12-2 during the regular season beating the Dallas Cowboys in the "Ice Bowl" on quarterback Bart Starr's one-yard sneak for the game winning touchdown. Two weeks later, the Packers soundly beat the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl I. This was Starr's only MVP season. This was the second of Green Bay's three consecutive NFL championship teams. Hall of Famers at every level on this team. Many of them All-Time Greats.

3. MIAMI 1972

The only team to have a perfect regular season record and win the Super Bowl. During the 1972 season, Bob Griese's ankle was broken in Week 5 as he was sacked by San Diego Chargers defensive tackle Ron East and defensive end Deacon Jones. He was replaced by veteran Earl Morrall for the rest of the regular season. Griese returned to the field as a substitute in the final regular season game against the Baltimore Colts and then also relieved Morrall for the second half of the AFC Championship game versus the Pittsburgh Steelers and then started for Miami in Super Bowl VII. On the ground, running backs Larry Csonka and Mercury Morris became the first teammates to each rush for 1,000 yards in a season. Paul Warfield led the receivers, averaging over 20 yards per catch on 29 receptions. The offensive line included future Hall of Fame members Jim Langer and Larry Little and Pro Bowler Norm Evans. The 1972 Dolphins defensive unit, "The No-Name Defense" was led by linebacker Nick Buoniconti, end Bill Stanfill, tackle Manny Fernandez, and safeties Dick Anderson and Jake Scott. In all, nine players—Csonka, Morris, Warfield, Little, Evans, Buoniconti, Stanfill, Anderson and Scott—were selected to the Pro Bowl, and Morrall, Stanfill and Anderson were named 1st team All-Pro.

4. PITTSBURGH 1975

This team was loaded with Hall of Famers, winning a second straight Super Bowl. The Steelers could beat you with Terry Bradshaw's arm or Franco Harris' legs. Eight of 14 regular-season opponents scored 10 points or fewer on what became the Steel Curtain defense. In three playoff games, opposing offenses averaged 12.3 points against the Steelers. Lynn Swann had his breakout in the Super Bowl. Harris was at his best all year. Everything fell into place in this season. Arguable Chuck Noll's greatest Steeler team.

5. **DALLAS 1977**

In 1977, the scouting consensus backed USC running back Ricky Bell as the best player in the draft. The Cowboys computer preferred Tony Dorsett. Tex Schramm and Tom Landry listened to the contraption. Dorsett rushed for 1,007 yards in the most defense-dominated season in modern pro football history. The ferocious Flex Defense, led by Harvey Martin and Randy White on the defensive line, also led the league in yards allowed. The Cowboys finally escaped years of playoff losses and Super Bowl near-misses. They won two playoff games by a combined 60-13 score before embarrassing the Broncos in a Super Bowl that was not nearly as close as the 27-10 score. Landry led this team to a 12-2 regular season record.

6. **SAN FRANCISCO 1989**

This was the first 49ers team of the 1980s without Bill Walsh, but offensive coordinator Mike Holmgren was still there, as were nearly all of the team's iconic offensive players from the decade. Tight end Brent Jones emerged as a starter. Roger Craig topped 1,000 yards rushing. Fullback Tom Rathman caught 73 passes. Joe Montana set a career high for passer rating at 112.1, completing 70.2 percent with 26 touchdowns and eight interceptions. Jerry Rice caught 17 touchdown passes while averaging 18.1 yards per reception. This 49ers team became the only one in NFL history to win back-to-back Super Bowls with different head coaches. Can you coach this team to a Super Bowl victory?

7. **WASHINGTON 1991**

The Washington had a strong running attack with Earnest Byner, Ricky Ervins and Gerald Riggs combining for nearly 2,000 yards and 19 touchdowns. Byner was the workhorse, Ervins provided elusiveness, and Riggs served as the short yardage back. Incredibly, the posse, Hall of Famer Art Monk, Gary Clark and Ricky Sanders, combined for more than 3,000 yards receiving. Most impressively, the 1991 version of the Hogs allowed Mark Rypien to be sacked only nine times all season. The feat is even more remarkable because Rypien was anything but a mobile quarterback. The Hogs' only Hall of Famer, left guard Russ Grimm, was a backup to Raleigh McKenzie that season. The two best linemen on the team were tackles Jim Lachey and Joe Jacoby. Brian Mitchell ran back two punts for touchdowns to lead Washington's excellent special teams, and kicker Chip Lohmiller made the Pro Bowl. The 1991 Redskins led the league in points and were second in points allowed. Washington sacked quarterbacks 50 times, dominating both lines of scrimmage. Defensive end Charles Mann, linebackers Wilber

Marshall and Andre Collins and Hall of Fame cornerback Darrell Green led a Redskins defense that held opponents to 14 points per game and shut out three opponents.

8. **DALLAS 1992**

The Cowboys of the early 1990s didn't beat opponents in any particular way. They beat opponents in every way. Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin made everything look easy. The supporting cast—Jay Novacek, Daryl Johnston, Alvin Harper, even return man Kelvin Martin—would have been featured weapons on an ordinary team. The 1992 Cowboys ranked fourth in the league in total yards and first in the league in fewest yards allowed. They blew out quality opponents by scores like 27-0 and 30-3. The playoffs were a joke, as they crushed the Eagles, soundly defeated Steve Young's 49ers and embarrassed the Bills in the Super Bowl, 52-17.

9. **SAN FRANCISCO 1994**

The **1994 San Francisco 49ers season** was the team's 49th season in the National Football League, and was highlighted by a victory in Super Bowl XXIX. The championship made San Francisco the first team to win five Super Bowls. After losing to the Dallas Cowboys in the previous two conference championship games, the 49ers made significant acquisitions in the 1994 free agent market. This included the signing of two-sport star Deion Sanders and Cowboys linebacker Ken Norton, Jr.. Sanders had a major impact on the team's success, winning the NFL Defensive Player of the Year Award and recording six interceptions. Quarterback Steve Young had his best NFL season and won his second MVP award. Steve Young set what was, at the time, the NFL record for highest passer rating in a season – 112.8. For the third consecutive season, the 49ers met the Cowboys in the NFC Championship Game.

10. **DENVER 1998**

The 1998 Broncos followed up their magical 1997 season, in which they were a surprise Super Bowl winner, with a surgically precise team. The Broncos were masterful in every aspect of the game. John Elway led the Broncos during his final NFL season, which culminated in an MVP-winning performance in an easy 34-19 win over Atlanta in the Super Bowl. The Broncos won their first 13 games and finished the regular season 14-2. The only game Denver lost that it truly tried to win was its 14th game, a last-moment loss to the Giants at The Meadowlands. The Broncos were never challenged during three postseason wins. Known for not having the best supporting casts for much of his career, Elway enjoyed the benefit of a stunning running game and a nasty, fierce defense in his final season. Running back Terrell Davis ran for 2,008 yards, which was then the third-highest rushing total in NFL history. He won the NFL MVP award that season. When Davis' hard, downhill running in coach Mike Shanahan's brilliant zone-blocking scheme was combined with the elegance of Elway passing to Rod Smith, Ed McCaffrey and the game-changing Shannon Sharpe, Denver was breathtaking to watch on offense. Defensively, this mean, nasty group always seemed to come up with the big play. Things rarely went wrong for this team. It simply steamrolled through the season.

11. MINNESOTA 1998

The Vikings became the third team in NFL history to win 15 games during the regular season, which earned them the National Football Conference (NFC) Central division championship and the first overall seed in the NFC playoffs. The team entered the playoffs as the favorite to win Super Bowl XXXIII, but their season ended when they were upset by the Atlanta Falcons in the 1998 NFC Championship Game. The 1998 Vikings team is historically known for its offense, which featured veteran quarterback Randall Cunningham, Hall of Fame wide receiver Cris Carter, and rookie wide receiver Randy Moss. The team scored 556 points during the season, which was an NFL record at the time, and Moss set an NFL record by catching 17 touchdown passes, the most ever by a rookie. On special teams, Gary Anderson became the first placekicker in NFL history to convert every field goal and extra point that he attempted. The Vikings defense ranked sixth in the league in points allowed and was led by Hall of Fame defensive tackle John Randle.

12. ST. LOUIS 1999

The 1999 Rams defeated the Tennessee Titans 23-16 in Super Bowl XXXIV. Rams linebacker Mike Jones tackled Kevin Dyson near the goal line on the final play of the game. The Rams, who went 13-3 en route to an NFC West title, featured an explosive offense “The Greatest Show on Turf” that season. Kurt Warner, Marshall Faulk, Isaac Bruce and Torry Holt were among those who made big contributions for St. Louis. Warner was named the regular-season MVP and the Super Bowl MVP. The Rams were fourth in the NFL in points allowed per game (15.1), first in run defense (74.3 yards per game) and tied for the league lead with 57 sacks. They also finished sixth in takeaways with 36 and scored eight defensive touchdowns.

13. SEATTLE 2013

The “Legion of Doom” defense led the Seahawks to their Super Bowl XLVIII victory overwhelming Denver. The defense led the league in points allowed (231), yards allowed (4,378), and takeaways (39), the first team to lead all three categories since the 1985 Chicago Bears. Russell Wilson had a good regular season, throwing more than 3,300 yards, 29 touchdowns and just nine interceptions for a quarterback rating of 101.2. In the postseason, Wilson added another three touchdown passes and wasn’t intercepted in any of his 68 passing attempts. Running back Marshawn Lynch picked up more than 1,500 total yards of offense and 14 touchdowns in the regular season. He added another 291 yards and four additional touchdowns in the postseason. This was the Seahawk’s second consecutive double-digit win season with a 13-3 record.

14. NEW ENGLAND 2016

Despite quarterback Tom Brady missing the first four games of the season serving his suspension for “Deflategate”, the Patriots won their 8th straight Eastern Division title,

appeared in their 6th consecutive AFC final and 9th Super Bowl appearance (the most of any team). The Patriots overcame a 28-3 deficit with 2 minutes remaining in the third quarter to win Super Bowl LI in overtime 34-28. This is the fifth Super Bowl championship for Brady and head coach Bill Belichick. This was the first Super Bowl that ended in overtime. Offensive line coach Dante Scarnecchia developed a young line that protected Brady and opened holes for LaGarrette Blount, Dion Lewis and Super Bowl hero, James White. The defensive lead the league in fewest points allowed (250) for the first time since 2003.